

# Fall Preparation

by Pat Stachon

The snow will be flying and you are not ready, spring bulbs still in a bag on the kitchen table, roses not protected, a heavy frost has prevailed and some of your favourite plants have blackened and look dreadful. I know all about it, putting off the cleaning up until the weather is warmer. Not much chance of that! I have dithered about long enough, delaying the inevitable. Warm days will be few and far between now as cooler weather is here.

Select the perennials to cut back, but remember that Purple Coneflower (echinacea), Black-eyed Susan (rudbeckia), Sea Holly (Eryngium) and Astilbe (Astilbe) are favoured by the gold finches for their seeds during the winter. Also think about keeping the Ornamental Grasses, especially the Miscanthus cultivars as they provide winter interest. The tall Sedums also look wonderful poking their dark red heads through the snow. If you have Elephant Ears (Bergenia) and Coral Bells (Heuchera), they should be cleaned up in the spring, but cut daylilies, iris, hosta and phlox now.

Dig up dahlias, glads and cannas, dry, and place in straw, or vermiculite in a cardboard box in a cool dry location. Protect your roses by hilling, your precious shrubs, azaleas, and tree peonies with hemp wrap or any wrap that you prefer. I usually do this Grey Cup Weekend, a bench mark day for me.

Spring bulbs must set roots and then go through a dormant period to bring them to bloom. As long as you can dig, bulbs can be planted. If they are stored in the refrigerator, the conditions are not conducive to blooming and they will not flower for you in spring. Bite the bullet fellow gardeners, put on your warmest jacket and a cozy hat and do not put it off any longer. Collect a few seeds such as marigolds (Tagetes) and salvia (Labiatae) while you are working about; dry them on a paper towel and place in an envelope for next spring.

While raking your leaves, place them on your flower beds, the veggie garden, and in paper bags. Place a few bags by your composter and

you can add leaves alternately with your kitchen waste to have some "black gold" for next year.

Seize the opportunity, get those garden chores done as soon as you can. A little effort now will provide you with gorgeous blooms next Spring. Winter's wrath is just around the corner!

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If you have any gardening questions, please e-mail them to [mg.questions@ripnet.com](mailto:mg.questions@ripnet.com).